Fated to My Vampire Lord

Chapter 2

Mira's POV

He looked away first. Damon Voss turned his gaze back to the front of the room like I was a wall he'd glanced at by accident. He then sat down in the back row with his two friends. I forced myself to look at my desk. My heart was doing something strange. Not fear. Something else. Something I didn't have a name for. Piper leaned into me, her voice barely a breath. "Mira." Her eyes were huge. "You're not really dating one of the vampires, are you?" "No," I said. Too fast. "No. He's just — he's not a vampire. I told you. I'm just not ready to say who it is yet." "Then why was he looking at you like that?" "He wasn't looking at me." He was. I knew he always was. I just didn't know why. Piper opened her mouth to push, but then Damon's head turned slightly in our direction, and she shut it. Everyone in this school knew the stories. A wolf girl had tried to flirt with Damon once — leaned across a table, touched his arm, said something about his eyes. He'd told her she was too loud. The next morning she'd been transferred to Ridgemont, a two-hour drive each way. Nobody talked near Damon Voss unless Damon Voss talked first. Alyssa crossed her arms and sat back. "So mysterious." Her smile turned a little sharper. "Is it because he's not exactly someone you can show off, so you're keeping him from me on purpose? We won't laugh at your fated mate, you know that right?" I knew she was only trying to rage bait me into answering, but I chose to stay quiet. I just gave a couple of awkward laughs and looked away. The teacher walked in — a woman in her thirties, brown hair pinned back, a wool cardigan over a button-down. "Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Ms. Evelyn." She set her bag on the desk and smiled like she meant it. "I'm new here, so I'm looking forward to getting to know all of you. And yes, I'm a wolf shifter." Her smile widened slightly. "Welcome to Vampire History. I know — exciting stuff." Nobody laughed. The vampires in the back didn't even look up. This was the thing about our school. They called it unity in diversity — a new generation growing up together, learning together, building the kind of peace that the last generation had never managed. That was the speech they gave at orientation every year. The reality was simpler. Fifty years ago, vampires won the war. Not by a little — by a lot. They had powers we couldn't match -- lifespans that outlasted all shifters, and superpowers that let one vampire warrior easily defeat many shifter warriors. When the shifter packs finally gathered together and begged for a truce, the vampires' price was simple: we submit. One vampire lord rules all. In exchange, we live. Damon's grandfather had made that deal. His father enforced it now. And Damon would inherit all of it. So yes, we sat in the same classrooms. But shifters took Vampire History, Vampire Biology, Vampire Political Systems as a required courses. Meanwhile, vampires didn't have to take a single class about us. Not our traditions, not our pack structures, not our biological systems. We learned about them. Most of them

didn't bother learning about us. And somehow we were supposed to feel equal. Ms. Evelyn pulled up a slide. "This semester, you'll be working in pairs on a research project. You have ten minutes at the end of class to choose partners and start brainstorming topics." Partners. I looked around the room. People always came to classes with their teams. Before this semaster, I'd always been with Jason. Now Jason was sitting with Alyssa, their desks already pushed together. Piper had turned to the girl next to her. Around the room, people were pairing off, pulling desks close, whispering. I stayed where I was. I smoothed down a corner of my notebook. I pretended to read the syllabus like the topics were genuinely fascinating. One by one, every seat filled a partner. Every pair settled. The noise got louder — everyone talking, laughing, sliding chairs across the floor — and I sat in the middle of it with my hands folded on my desk and my face carefully blank. It shouldn't have bothered me. Being the foster kid in the pack meant being the odd one out at every event, every group activity, every party. Before I dated Jason, I was used to being alone. But being used to something doesn't mean it stops hurting. Alyssa glanced over. She didn't even try to hide her smile. This was exactly what she wanted — me, alone, in a room full of people who had someone and didn't need me. Ms. Evelyn noticed. She scanned the room, then her eyes landed on the back row. On Damon and his two friends. "Excuse me," she said. "Would one of you be willing to partner with — " She checked her list. "Mira? Since the numbers are uneven, we could split your group." The room went still. I wanted to disappear through the floor. Everyone knew Damon didn't work with shifters. He didn't talk to shifters. He barely acknowledged that shifter teachers existed. Ms. Evelyn was new — she didn't know what she was asking. A couple of students exchanged looks. Piper's mouth fell open. Someone in the second row actually turned around to watch. Damon leaned back in his chair. He didn't look at Ms. Evelyn. His eyes moved past her, across the rows, and landed on me. I was already planning what to say. It's fine, Ms. Evelyn, I don't mind a three-person group. Or: I can work alone, no big deal. Something to end this silence before it swallowed me whole. Damon's friend Felix smirked. Nikolai stifled a laugh. They were all waiting for Damon to say what everyone expected him to say: no. "Why not," Damon said. My stomach dropped. He tipped his chin toward the empty seat beside him. "Sit here. I will be your partner."